



**Archaeological building recording with observation
investigation and recording at the former
Baptist Church, Wappenham Road
Helmdon, Northamptonshire
March to July 2014**

S/2013/1311/FUL

Report No. 14/209

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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Project Manager: Anthony Maull
Site Code:
NGR: SP 58954 44060

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With thanks to Ms R Gulliver for providing photographs

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. Molanort1-193651	
Project title	Archaeological building recording and watching brief at the former Baptist Church, Helmdon, Northamptonshire		
Short description	A programme of archaeological building recording and watching brief was undertaken by MOLA Northampton between the March and July 2014 for Mr J Bougourd, acting on behalf of BJ Property Solutions Ltd, at the former Baptist Church, Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. Planning permission had been granted to redevelop the building into a private dwelling. The baptismal pool was still in place and burials dating to the 19th century were recorded in the front of the church.		
Project type	Archaeological building recording with observation, investigation and recording		
Site Status	-		
Previous work	-		
Current land use	Former Baptist Church with associated burials		
Future work	unknown		
Monument type and period	19th-century building with 20th-century extension		
Significant finds	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire		
Post code	-		
OS co-ordinates	SP 58954 44060		
Area (sq m/ha)	-		
Height aOD	-		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Archaeological building recording with observation, investigation and recording at the former Baptist Church, Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, March to July 2014		
Project brief originator	NCC Assistant Archaeological Advisor		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
Project Managers	Antony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Mr J Bougourd, acting on behalf of BJ Property Solutions Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	11 March 2014		
End date	July 2014		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	Northampton Store	-	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Title	Archaeological building recording with observation, investigation and recording at the former Baptist Church, Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, March to July 2014		
Serial title & volume	14/209		
Author(s)	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
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Archaeological building recording with observation investigation and recording at the former Baptist Chapel, Wappenham Road Helmdon, Northamptonshire March to July 2014

Abstract

A programme of archaeological building recording with observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA Northampton between the March and July 2014 for Mr J Bougourd, acting on behalf of BJ Property Solutions Ltd, at the former Baptist Chapel, Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. The chapel was opened in 1841 and extended in 1953. Planning permission had been granted to redevelop the building into a private dwelling. The baptismal pool was still in place and burials dating to the 19th century were recorded in the front of the chapel.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Mr J Bougourd, acting on behalf of BJ Property Solutions Ltd, to carry out archaeological building recording with observation, investigation and recording at the former Baptist Chapel, Wappenham Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 58954 44060, Fig 1) between March and July 2014. Planning has been granted for the redevelopment of the former Baptist chapel into a private dwelling (planning application: S/2013/1311/FUL).

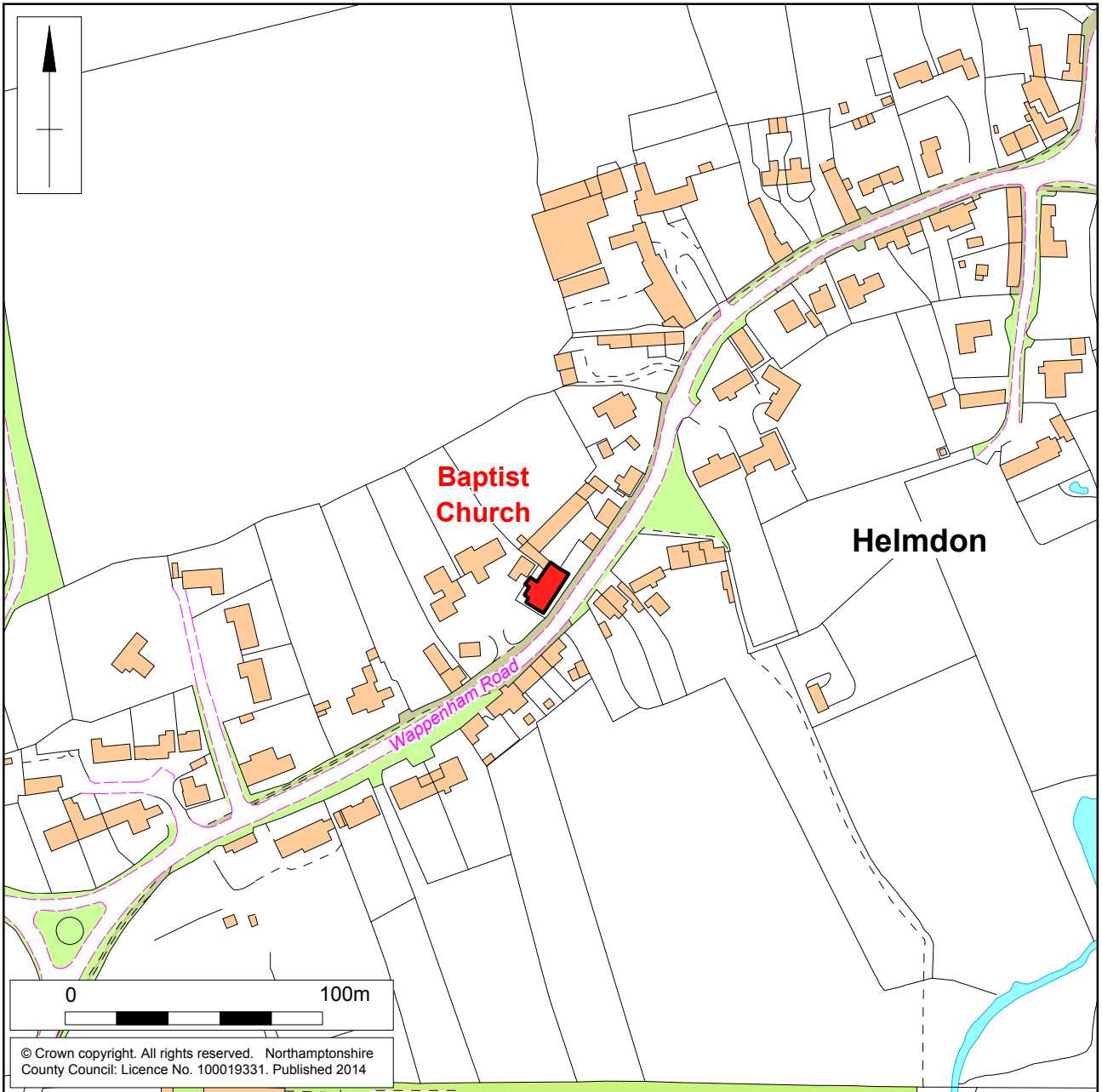
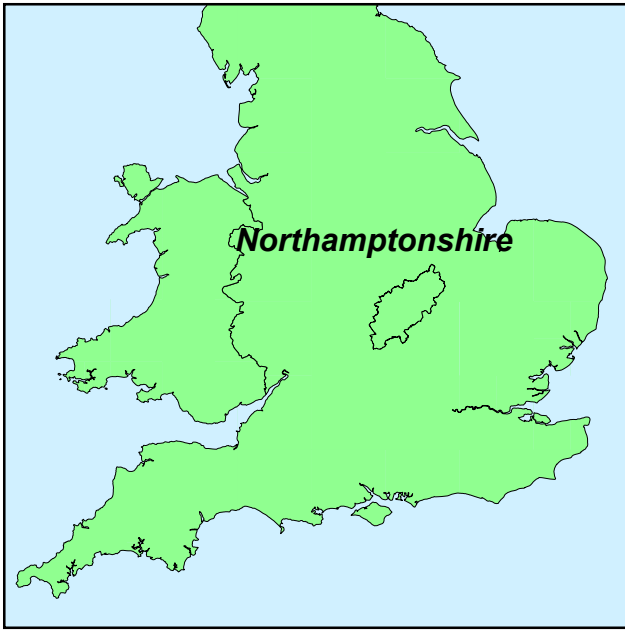
The works were required by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council in correspondence dated 31 October 2013 (Mordue 2013) to provide a comprehensive visual record of the structure prior to the permitted partial demolition and conversion, a Level 2 Building Recording Survey. A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by MOLA Northampton (MOLA 2014).

MOLA is an Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) registered organisation. The work was carried out in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IfA 2013), *for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008), the procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)* (EH 1995) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2006) and adheres to the procedural document National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF 2012).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The village of Helmdon lies approximately 19km to the south-west of Towcester. The investigation area lies on the north side of Wappenham Road on the northern side of the village of Helmdon.



Scale 1:2500

Site location Fig 1

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Blisworth Limestone Formation (BGS Geotitles <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geotitles/>).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The investigation area lies within an area of archaeological interest. There is evidence of settlement in the surrounding area during the Romano-British period in the form of a well, dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, discovered during quarrying. Associated with this were traces of a corn dryer. A Roman coin was found in the grounds of Helmdon House in the 1940s.

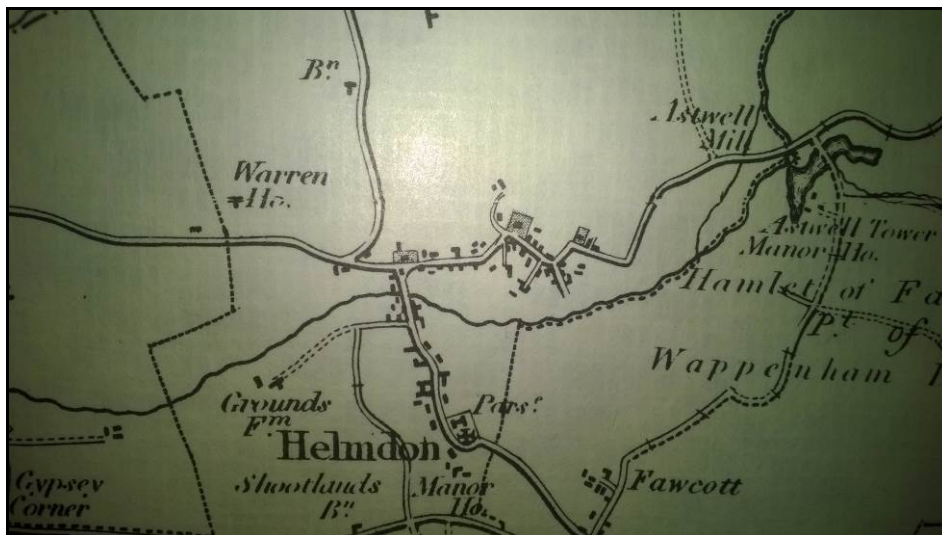
The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086AD where it is recorded as *Elmedene*. Nearby lies Bunny Hall, this dates from the late 16th/early 17th centuries with later additions. The present church of St Mary the Virgin dates from the 13th century with 17th-century additions and alterations. It was restored between 1718 and 1725.

The Baptist chapel in Helmdon opened in 1841 and extended in 1953 for a schoolroom. The chapel went out of use as a place of worship in 2004 due to structural problems with a wall.

An archaeological watching brief undertaken at 47-55 Church Street in 2008 (Leigh 2008) revealed no archaeological remains. North of the site, earthwork survey and excavation carried out in 1994 to the rear of 47-55 Church Street confirmed the presence of boundary ditches dating from the 11th-15th centuries, but no significant settlement remains (Holmes and Soden 1994). A medieval spearhead was found to the south-east of the site. Excavation and a watching brief at Manor Farm, about 200m south-west of the development area found banks and ditches associated with the medieval Overbury Manor, the banks had been denuded and the ditches infilled in the post-medieval period (Holmes 2000).

No previous archaeological work is recorded as having been carried out within the site, up to the present application the chapel has lain unused following its closure.

2.3 Historical maps and photographic evidence



1827 map of the County of Northampton by A Bryant Fig 2



1880 Ordnance Survey map Fig 3



Baptist Chapel on the right side, late 19th or early 20th century (R Gulliver) Fig 4

The Ordnance survey map of 1880 (Fig 3) shows the chapel at its location, the earlier 1827 map of Northamptonshire by A Bryant (Fig 2) is unclear as to what may have been in its place. A photograph, probably dating from the late 19th or early 20th centuries depicts the chapel as it originally appeared (Fig 4).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- To undertake a Level 2 Building Recording Survey of the building with supplementary documentary research;
- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the redevelopment works;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Recover any artefacts that may assist in the development of pottery type series within the region;
- Establish the relationship of any archaeological deposits within the wider contemporary landscape;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The building was recorded in accordance with the standards, conventions and specifications defined in English Heritage, *Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice* (2006b). The building recording conformed to Level II, this provided a descriptive record. The drawn record was based upon the architects plans produced for the planning application, which were enhanced for purely archaeological purposes and accuracy was verified. A photographic survey to English Heritage Level II was completed showing the buildings on the day of survey. A photographic record was maintained in monochrome film and colour digital format to ensure preservation by record prior to redevelopment.

The archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008).

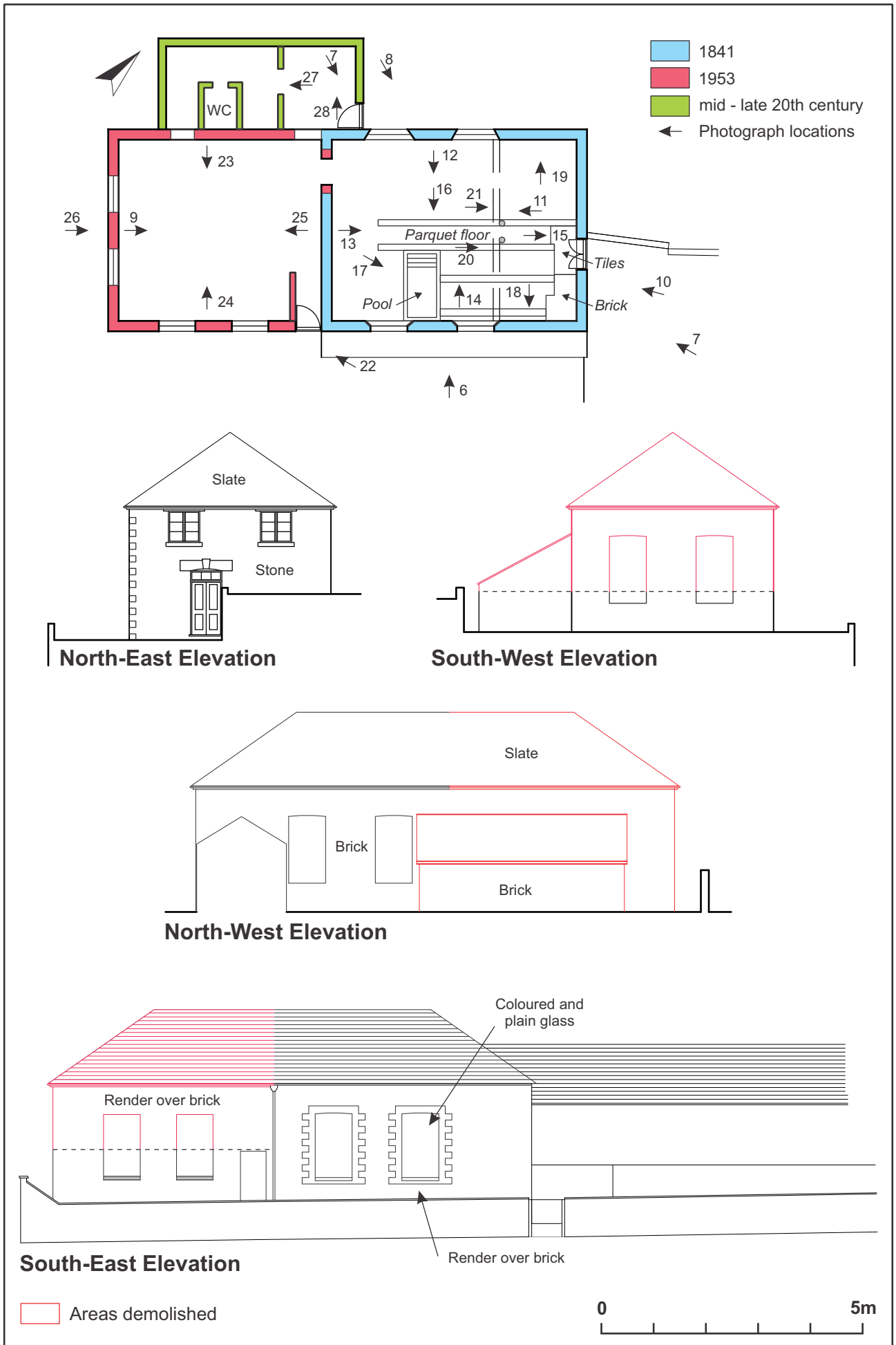
4 THE BUILDING RECORDING

4.1 Phase I: the original chapel 1841

The exterior

The building comprised a rectangular plan aligned south-west to north-east, parallel with Wappenham Road. The north-eastern elevation and the south-western elevation of the building were built with roughly coursed light grey stone (Figs 5 and 7). The longer south-eastern and north-western elevations were brick, laid in an irregular bond with English bond in places. The brick work was grey rendered on the south-eastern elevation, facing the street, with decorative detailing around the two side windows and at the front where brick and stone were keyed in. The hipped roof was covered in slate (Figs 6 to 9).

The entrance was on the north-eastern elevation through a green painted wooden panelled double door with a transom window. The lintel was white painted stone with a keystone (Fig 10). The fenestration comprised two full height windows in the north and south elevations. These comprised wooden frames and 15 light with the top six coloured (Figs 6 and 8). Two windows were located above the main entrance in the eastern elevation. The wooden casement windows comprised six light (Fig 7).



Scale 1:100

Plan and elevations Fig 5



South-east elevation fronting Wappenham Road Fig 6



North-east elevation with main entrance Fig 7



North-west elevation of original building Fig 8



South-west elevation of original building Fig 9



Main entrance Fig 10

The interior

The interior of the chapel was panelled with tongue and groove on the lower part. The brick and stone is bare and there are holes in the walls at two levels where the panelling would have been secured to the wall. The walls above were plastered and painted beige (Figs 11 to 14).

Internally the windows were set into chamfered openings. A doorway was created in the western elevation, the stone is squared up with brick, to allow passage into the schoolroom (Fig 11).

The floor was covered in boards and carpet. Upon their removal, the central isle with wooden parquet flooring and the tiling by the front door was uncovered. The tiling consisted of squares in beige, black and red (Fig 15). At the time of the survey the brick support of the pews and flooring were still in place to the south of the central isle, this was directly laid on the natural geology (Fig 16). The ceiling was lath and plaster painted beige.

The sunken baptismal pool (piscine) was situated towards the south-western corner, covered up by the modern flooring. It was constructed of brick and had steps from the northern side, it was painted dark green (Fig 17).

The gallery was situated along the north-eastern elevation above the front entrance (Fig 13). The stairs leading up were in the south-eastern corner (Fig 18) and the seating was stepped (Fig 19). The beam supporting the gallery had two iron poles for

support that were positioned centrally on either side of the central aisle (Fig 20). A picture supplied that was taken before the gallery was removed shows that the stairs were enclosed with a cast iron railing acting as a barrier at the front (Fig 21).



Interior south-west elevation Fig 11



Interior south-east elevation Fig 12



Interior north-east elevation Fig 13



Interior north-west elevation Fig 14



Tiling and parquet aisle Fig 15



Remnants of original flooring structure Fig 16



The baptismal pool Fig 17



After removal of gallery showing the location of the staircase, looking south Fig 18



After removal of gallery, looking north Fig 19



Metal poles supporting the gallery, looking north-east Fig 20



The gallery before removal (R Gulliver) Fig 21

4.2 Phase II: the schoolroom extension 1953

The exterior

The schoolroom extension was constructed in red brick and rendered. The render had been scoured to imitate stone blocks. An external entrance was on the south-eastern side, comprising a door with three panels in the lower third and windows comprising six lights above (Fig 22). There were four windows, two in the south-eastern elevation and two in the south-western elevation. The two remaining windows in the south-western elevation were wooden casement windows of 15 light of which two lower pairs and one at the top could be opened.



Southern elevation with door, looking north-west Fig 22

The interior

The entrance was partitioned and the scoring on the wall suggested it may have been covered (Fig 23). There were two further doors in the north-western elevation leading into the later extension with the toilet (Fig 24). The tongue and groove panelling, 1.05m high, from the main building was carried on only on the northern wall up to the second door. The walls were plastered and painted beige. Above the height of the panelling were commemorative stones set into the walls (Figs 23 to 25). Figure 26 shows these being laid. The floor comprised concrete.

On the north-western side of the schoolroom were two further rooms. Each could be accessed separately from the schoolroom, and there was an external access from the courtyard at the eastern side. The toilet was in a brick partition. The decorative scheme of the chapel and schoolroom appears to have been carried over (Figs 27 and 28). Due to the extent of demolition and the health and safety issues caused by the rubble on the floor no further recording could be carried out. It is not clear whether this extension is contemporary or later.



Schoolroom extension, looking south-east Fig 23



Schoolroom extension, looking north-west Fig 24



Schoolroom extension, looking south-west Fig 25



Laying of commemorative stones, 1952 (R Gulliver) Fig 26



Extension with toilet, looking south-west Fig 27



Extension, looking north Fig 28

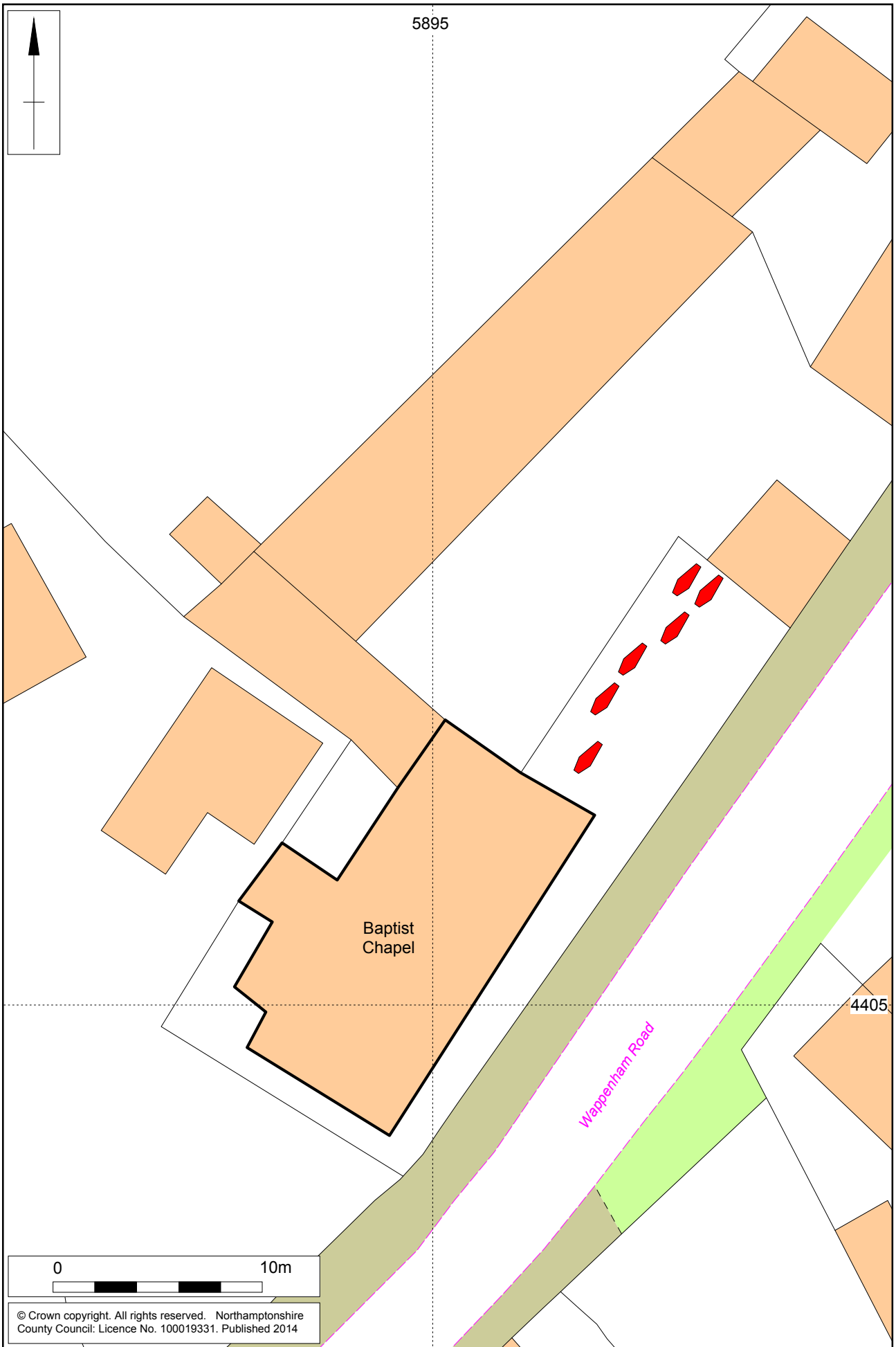
5 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

5.1 The recorded evidence

An archaeological investigation, observation and recording was carried out on the 11 March 2014 during the reduction of the ground level in the grassed area in front of the chapel in preparation for access and parking. The natural geology comprised blue-grey clay c 0.87m below the original ground level, this was overlain by mid red-brown silty sand subsoil c 0.50m thick. The topsoil was dark brown loam c 0.37m thick. The ground was undisturbed.

5.2 The burials

A set of grave stones, comprising a header and footer stone, were situated along the northern boundary wall (Figs 29 to 31). They were apparently moved to that location from the centre of the grass area. In the north-western corner of the burial ground six burials were uncovered at c 0.85m to 1.00m below the original ground level in waterlogged conditions. The coffins were oak and ranged in size from 1.80m and 1.35m in length. The bones were black discoloured with leather and cloth fragments surviving in the smallest and northernmost burial.



Scale 1:250

Locations of the burials Fig 29



Gravestone in its current location, looking north-west Fig 30



Head and footer stones Fig 31

6 DISCUSSION

An archaeological building recording survey was undertaken when MOLA Northampton was notified of commencement of work. An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out during the ground reduction of the front area. The building was to be converted to a private dwelling, which included the demolition of the 1953 extension.

The chapel was opened in 1841, a photograph (Fig 4) shows the chapel around the turn of the last century comprising a brick built rectangular building with a hipped roof, a gallery and baptismal pool inside. The schoolroom extension was opened in 1953. Besides the extension and creation of an opening at the rear of the building the other major alteration to the building was the flooring. During the work the baptismal pool and parts of the original flooring was uncovered, which had been covered by boards and carpets.

No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were recorded during the reduction of the front area and the stratigraphy appears to be undisturbed. A headstone with a footstone was placed, probably not in its original position, against the wall. During ground reduction six burials dating to the 19th century were found. Permission to exhume the human remains was sought and granted from the Ministry of Justice. The remains will be reinterred at the nearby graveyard of Woodend.

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Websites

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